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FEBRUARY 9, 1987

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- ISDN's missing link
- Why Sandoz loves Unix
- IBM's 400 club
- HP Spectrum up close
- Peaking hard disk power

COMPUTER
DECISIONS
THE MAGAZINE FOR MIS EXECUTIVES
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SOFT WARS

Aggressive new leaders are spearheading a trend toward consolidation in the large-systems software industry. Will users benefit?

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Clockwise from lower left: Wang of Computer Associates Int'l., Eskra of Pansophic Systems, Berdy of On-Line Software, Imlay of MSA, and Liemandt of Uccel.

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Micro suits now in style

In mainframes, it's IBM vs. Hitachi and Fujitsu. In minis, it's DEC vs. Emulex. Now the two leaders in micro software—Lotus Development Corp. and Ashton-Tate—are going to court in separate actions to ward off competitors by charging that their technology was ripped off.

In the action with more far-reaching consequences, Cambridge, MA-based Lotus is charging that Paperback Software's VP Planner and Mosaic's Twin (both about $100) illegally copy the "look and feel" and user interface of Lotus 1-2-3 ($495). Last year, in a suit brought by Broderbund Software (San Rafael, CA), a judge ruled that Broderbund's user interface was copyrightable.

Lotus claims it is trying to protect its intellectual property, but critics counter that the suit will impede competition and deter other developers from improving on Lotus' design in other packages. Paperback Software (Berkeley, CA) and Mosaic (Cambridge, MA) refute Lotus' claims. Ironically, Pergamon Journals Inc. (Elmsford, NY) recently filed a lawsuit charging that Lotus' new Manuscript package infringed on Pergamon's Manuscript Manager software trademark.

Ashton-Tate (Torrance, CA) is suing Migent Inc. (Incline Village, NV), for allegedly stealing trade secrets. Migent recently hired some of Ashton-Tate's best talent; specifically named as defendants are Wayne Ratliff, the developer of dBase II, and Gary Lang, formerly Ashton-Tate's SQL specialist. Ashton-Tate claims Migent is using proprietary Ashton-Tate information in a new 32-bit database management system under development. Migent denies the allegations.

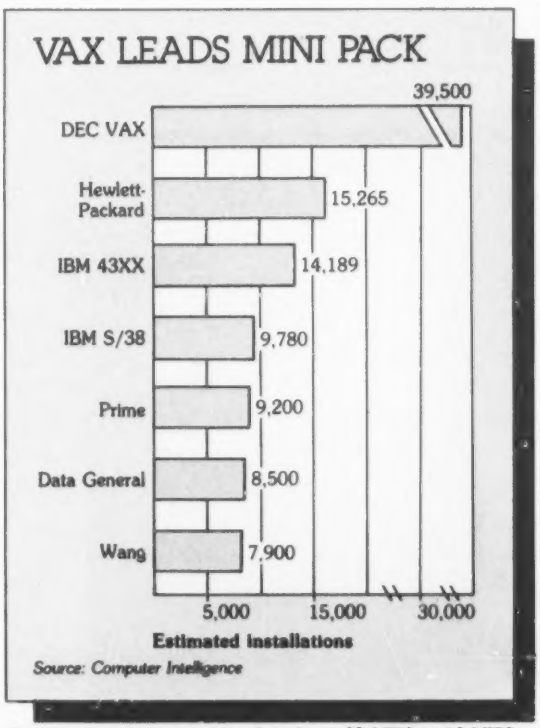
As for Digital Equipment Corp., a Massachusetts federal judge recently granted a temporary injunction against Emulex Corp. (Costa Mesa, CA) that prevents Emulex from selling any of the peripheral technology that is the subject of the ongoing litigation between the two vendors. In papers mentioning secret meetings in Emulex's parking lot, DEC claims Emulex illegally obtained proprietary DEC peripheral interface information. □

New channel cuts I/O time

National Advanced Systems Inc. announced the Model 7990-2X Semiconductor Disk Subsystem, the first IBM plug-compatible peripheral to offer a channel speed of 6 Mbytes per second. NAS claims the new channel cuts input/output response time by 48 percent.

NAS is offering the new channel as a standard feature for the AS/XL mainframe series. Any storage subsystem with caches or buffers are excellent candidates for the 6-Mbyte feature, claims NAS. The Mountain View, CA, vendor says the channel will be available at no additional charge in future offerings, and that field upgrades are also free.

Currently, the Model 7990-2X—slated for April delivery—is the only plug-compatible peripheral offering 6-Mbyte-per-second performance. However, it's likely to have company soon. According to Phoenix-based Annex Research, Hitachi Ltd.'s MT-400 3480-type tape cartridge—which already operates at 6 Mbytes per second—is likely to appear on the U.S. market. □



Comparing minicomputers rated at about .25 MIPS to 12 MIPS, Computer Intelligence estimated the top mini computers. IBM's System/36, with an installed base of 51,735, primarily is rated at under .25 MIPS.

Untimely dp power outage

Five weeks before its move into a new data center with its own diesel-powered uninterruptible power supply, Putnam Investor Services lost all power at its Shareholder Services division when a generator exploded at the corporation's offices in Boston.

Putnam used computer rooms of the Sungard Recovery Services backup center in Philadelphia for six days. To handle incoming phone calls from investors, Putnam borrowed several extra 800 lines from WGBH, the local public TV station, which was between funding drives at the time.

Eight computer operators, lugging boxes of backup tapes stored in a vault at a nearby bank, flew down to Philadelphia the day after the blackout on December 10. Even after Putnam obtained a mobile power van for the stricken data center, it still relied on Sungard computers to support 312 terminals. The Shareholder Services division now occupies the new data center in Quincy, MA. □